EVIDENCE WEEK 2019

In June 2019 more than 100 MPs and peers got involved in Evidence Week in the UK Parliament. They received 3-minute briefings at ‘evidence pods’ on how to handle the evidence on 20 pressing policy issues in the Upper Waiting Hall in the House of Commons.

Evidence Week in Parliament aimed to equip MPs with the tools they need to interrogate evidence across a range of policy issues. Between elections, Parliament is fundamental to scrutinising the evidential reasoning of policy. Increasingly, this means asking searching questions of new sources of data, as well as complex interactions between variables and trade offs to consider.

To open Evidence Week community speakers brought to life the same evidence issues that the MPs are currently dealing with, as outlined in new results released at the event from Ipsos MORI’s MP survey, produced by SAGE Publishing.

Innovative 3-minute evidence briefings

Evidence Week was run by Sense about Science, in partnership with the House of Commons Library, POST (the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology) and the House of Commons Science and Technology Committee.

We brought in 20 research groups from partner organisations to host innovative evidence pods. These 3-minute briefings tackled issues such as how to visualise community inequalities, work out the effect of pupil premium or see the scale of the drone noise problem. We counted 163 of these innovative briefings given to MPs and peers across the two days.

“I think Evidence Week is really important – we politicians often seem to shoot from the hip.” - Rupa Huq MP

“Worrying about whether politicians have science backgrounds is a mistake. What we should ask is, what are the insights and resources from research that would help politicians? That’s what Evidence Week is for.” - Tracey Brown, Sense about Science
MPs found the 3-minute format to be something they could work with...

“What was great about this was that it encouraged us to see it as it was just 3 minutes. Now, I did not take just 3 minutes, I took longer, because I was really interested.”

“I learnt more in five minutes than in a very long time.”

“I thought the pods were an excellent concept and coupled with the enthusiasm of individuals was a good partnership for promoting science”

A summary of Evidence Week’s impact...

- 83 MPs engaged (13% of all MPs), plus 20 peers and 29 government/parliamentary staff
- Committees particularly well represented at Evidence Week included the Science and Technology Committee and the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee among others
- 237,000 views and 2,265 engagements on Sense about Science Evidence Week tweets, with even more MPs, peers and researchers connecting using #EvidenceWeek
- The BBC (Today in Parliament programme) and The Times picked up the story. It was also listed on relevant parliamentary publications